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Cuban Raiders Can't Hit 'Big Three' Oil Refineries

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By JACK ANDERSON
WASHINGTON — Those Cuban commandos who have been striking at Castro with hit-and-run raids have received strange but strict orders from the Central Intelligence Agency not to attack Havana's three oil refineries, which supply the fuel for the dictator's war machine.



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Destruction of the Esso, Texaco, and Shell refineries would bring Castro's tanks, trucks, and planes to a grinding halt. Such is the power of the big oil companies, however, that the CIA is more concerned about protecting their property than crippling Castro.

And an aide to Cuban exile leader Manuel Artime lamely explained to this column: "We don't want to damage foreign property."

Of course, the CIA will deny issuing any such order or, for that matter, having anything to do with the commando raids. This satisfies protocol, but fools no one.

A year ago, Artime complained to this column that

the CIA had cut the allowance for his freedom fighters down to a token \$1,000 a month.

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HE HASN'T been complaining lately. He now has fast boats, plenty of arms, and pay checks for anyone willing to fight. His aides have admitted frankly to this column that everything is

supplied by the CIA, or "The Company" as they call it.

The awesome influence of the oil barons had been felt earlier in the Cuban struggle. During the Bay of Pigs fiasco, a free-Cuba plane, loaded with bombs, radioed that it was over the Esso refinery in Havana. It requested permission to bomb it along with the nearby Texaco and Shell plants.

But CIA headquarters ordered the plane to ignore the refineries and look for a gun emplacement to bomb.

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LATER, Mike McLaney, an American gambler who ran a casino in Havana and stayed on for 18 months after Castro's take-over, sent the CIA a detailed plan for knocking out the three refineries. But instead of getting his plan approved, McLaney got an urgent phone call warning him not to attempt such a thing under any circumstances.

Behind these incidents, of course, is the profits-before-patriotism attitude of the oil tycoons who won't sacrifice their facilities to overthrow Castro but would rather gamble on getting them back intact at some later date.

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